United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Iraqi Foreign Minister tells General Assembly his country will ask for permission to export oil worth $4 billion over six months period; net returns of such exports to be deposited in United Nations escrow account for purchase of foodstuffs and medicines; Assembly also hears statements by President of Senegal; Prime Minister of Burundi; Foreign Ministers of Qatar, Sudan, Venezuela, Afghanistan, United Arab Emirates; Yesterday, Paraguay, Togo, Guatemala and Gambia addressed Assembly.

+ United Nations Protection Force in Croatia faces difficulties implementing plan in three Protection Areas, says Secretary-General, recommending that Security Council authorize Force to monitor withdrawal of Yugoslav Army from Croatia, once agreement has been finalized.

+ President of Republic of Yugoslavia and President of Croatia agree to intensify work towards a normalization of relations between their two countries, according to joint declaration issued in Geneva.

+ UNICEF staff member killed in southern Sudan; another is missing.

+ Secretary-General to sign agreement to establish United Nations Interim Office in Azerbaijan.

+ Latvia asks for United Nations observers to participate in future negotiations between Latvia and Russian Federation on withdrawal of military forces from that territory.

+ Cedric Thornberry appointed Deputy Chief of UNPROFOR by Secretary-General; will continue to serve as Director of Civil Affairs of UNPROFOR.

+ Oceanographer Jacques-Yves Cousteau tells press conference that mankind has been naive about overpopulation, allowing "formidable mistake" to develop.

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For information media—not an official record

The Foreign Minister of Iraq, Mohammed Saeed Al-Sahaf, told the General Assembly this afternoon that his country was prepared to ask to be allowed to export crude oil and oil products in a net amount no less than $4 billion for a period of six months. He also asked that the net returns of the exports be deposited in an escrow account set up by the United Nations, to be used for the purchase of foodstuffs, medicines and other civilian needs; and that the Security Council name certain countries from which goods may be purchased according to normal commercial practices. In addition, Mr. Al-Sahaf said Iraq would be prepared to grant 5 per cent of the net revenue of this operation to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies as a contribution towards international relief work in Somalia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and other countries.

The Iraqi Minister said attempts were being made to seize Iraq's frozen assets through a draft resolution under consideration in the Security Council which, he noted, had no justification or legitimacy whatsoever, since Iraq had cooperated in good faith with the United Nations in order to reach an agreement on the export of quantities of Iraqi oil and the use of the revenues thereof.

The Iraqi Foreign Minister also stressed that, while his country endeavoured in earnest to implement its obligations under the Security Council resolutions, the Council had failed to take any step in return towards lifting the blockade or even easing the economic fetters imposed on Iraq. The campaigns of threats and intimidation under the cover of the United Nations resolutions continued unabated in order to create the right climate for the economic blockade to remain in place and for new military strikes to be perpetrated against Iraq in order to destabilize its political system, he said.

Opening the debate in the General Assembly this morning, President Abdou Diouf of Senegal, noted that the economic plight of Africa was particularly serious. Its rates of economic growth were the lowest in the world in proportion with demographic growth, and there were fewer and fewer investments and a growing need for infrastructure. These facts could be explained partly by the youth of African countries, but the main reason was that their commodities and other products were sold at prices set without the consent of the countries concerned. The situation had even worsened despite the efforts by African leaders during the 1980s, he said.

The Senegalese President also stressed that, while the African countries had undertaken to carry out structural changes needed for long-term development and growth, the international community had not extended the assistance it had promised to aid Africa in achieving that goal. Perhaps what was needed, he indicated, were frequent progress evaluations involving both parties. Africa's situation continued to worsen. That was reflected in external debt crisis, the deteriorating environment, drought in southern Africa and the growing acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) pandemic.

Mr. Diouf also said that the prevention and solution of conflicts in Africa would be possible only if the flow of arms to combatants was stopped.

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Economic growth based on a rationalization of development efforts, he said, would involve improved inter-African relations, adequate structures and the possibility of receiving fair prices for African products.

Asserting that arms control would remain one of the central issues engaging the United Nations, Sheikh Hamad Bin Jabr Al-Athani, Foreign Minister of Qatar, said this morning that his country had a special interest in the prohibition of chemical and other weapons of mass destruction because of its experience during the war of liberation of Kuwait. He told the Assembly that Qatar attached great hopes to the success of the Conference on Disarmament in rapidly concluding a convention on prohibition of chemical weapons and the prevention of the spread of research and production techniques in this field.

The Minister also spoke about the question of Palestine, welcoming the resumption of negotiations between the concerned parties in Washington and reaffirming his country's commitment to support the peace efforts. The denial by Israel of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian is at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Once a solution to the question of Palestine has been achieved in a way acceptable to the Palestinians, he said, his country would also accept it. "If Israel wants to live in peace, she should withdraw, not only from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but from all Arab occupied territories including East Jerusalem, the Golan and Southern Lebanon", he said.

The principles of human rights were being exploited and misused as a vehicle to interfere in the internal affairs of smaller States, Ali Ahmed Sahloul, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Sudan, noted this morning, while stressing that the crimes and violations by allied States were ignored.

Accusations of human rights violations were being "constantly fabricated" against those countries which insist on independent decision-making, he said. The enhancement of human rights and basic freedoms could only properly materialize through international cooperation and not through intimidation or confrontation. It was the right of all peoples to establish their political and economic system and institutions on the basis of respect to the principles of national sovereignty, self-determination and non-interference in the internal affairs of others, he said.

The Sudanese Foreign Minister also expressed his Government's willingness to find a peaceful and lasting political solution to the problem of the southern Sudan. The Government has so far achieved considerable progress, as reflected in the outcome of Abuja talks of May this year under the auspices of the President of Nigeria, and was looking forward to the forthcoming second round of talks scheduled to be held shortly in the same city. These talks might reach a lasting solution with rebel movement by the end of the year, he explained.

After 26 years of a one-party system, Burundi had last year installed a multi-party system, Adrien Sibomana, Prime Minister of Burundi, told the Assembly this morning.

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In terms of Burundi's process of democratization, Mr. Sibomana said that nothing was more important than to involve all sectors of the country's population. He called for all refugees from Burundi to return from wherever they were, and pointed out that already 25,000 refugees had rejoined Burundi society.

Turning to the issue of development, he recalled that his Government had initiated a programme of structural adjustment, with the support of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), in order to meet the basic needs of the population and to enhance the liberalization of Burundi's economy, already initiated with the establishment of a free trade zone.

The Foreign Minister of Venezuela, Fernando Ochoa Antich, noted this morning that since the end of the confrontation between East and West, the third world was not perceived any longer as having any political ot strategic usefulness. Raw materials had become marginal, the drop in demand for commodities became more acute, the international markets could almost do without the South, he said.

In order to preserve peace, he went on saying, countries must search for balanced links between the hemispheres, put an end to confrontation and strengthen cooperation among people. For its part, he said, the South must face its challenge, by uprooting demagogic populism, inefficiency and corruption. It must also devote itself to productive work and reward creation.

However, he noted, while large regions in the South, especially in Latin America, were striving to internationalize their economies, by opening up to competition, the North was closing itself into blocs that turned inward. If this rigid attitude which characterized some international financial institutions persisted, as well as the dangerous protectionism which was again emerging among the industrialized countries, then the 1990s - which in Latin America had begun with severe economic measures and hopeful signs of growth - could turn out to be a lost decade, he said.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Afghanistan, Alaj Seyd Salman Gailani, said this afternoon that his newly established Government was preparing the way for the holding of free and fair elections by trying to solve existing political problems -- the legacy of 14 years of war in his country -- through the peaceful means of negotiations and dialogue. The first step involved the convening of a traditional "Loya Jirgah", comprised of the representatives of the people of Afghanistan, to be held probably within the next two months, he said.

He told the Assembly that his Government was exerting every effort to establish appropriate safeguards and guarantees to facilitate a speedy transition of power to an elected government, and added that if necessary it would request the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference to supervise the proceedings.

Citing the almost total devastation of his country, including some two million disabled persons, 1.5 million orphans of war and the implantation of

10 million mines by Soviet occupying forces, the Afghan Minister said "perhaps the coming generation of Afghans may not be able to walk without fearing their own soil". He called on the international community to give financial support to the related projects of the United Nations in Afghanistan.

He also urged the Commonwealth of Independent States to address "urgently and seriously" the question of some 30,000 Afghans missing during the years of the former Soviet Union's aggression on Afghanistan

Calling upon the Government of Iran to embark on the settlement of the outstanding issues with his country, especially concerning the occupation of Greater Tumb, Lesser Tumb and Abu Mousa, the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates, Rashid Abdullah Al-Noami, said this afternoon that Iran, with its occupation of the islands, was violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Al-Noami went on to say that the Gulf region was still suffering from Iraq's aggression against Kuwait. He urged the international community to exert more pressure on the Iraqi regime in order to secure the speedy release of Kuwaitis and other detainees and prisoners of war. The recent events in the Gulf had had a negative impact on the security of the region, as well as on its economic, social and environmental aspects. In view of those developments, the United Arab Emirates had begun a dialogue with the Gulf Cooperation Council States on relations and inter-actions among the States of the region.

Regional integration offered the best prospect for economic development in today's world, the Foreign Minister of Paraguay, Alexis Frutos Vaesken, pointed out last night. He emphasized the important role played by the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) in the economic development of its members - Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay.

Speaking about human rights, the Foreign Minister said that Paraguay was on the path to democracy based on full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. A new constitution had been voted into force on 20 June, and the democratic process, which had stabilized Paraguay's economy, had been brought about by its people, who had rejected dictatorship and totalitarianism.

The struggle for a democratic Togo was essentially that of the Togolese people, Ouattara Fambare Natchaba, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Togo, told the Assembly last night.

Throughout the 1980s, breaking with the previous regime, Togo had introduced the progressive democratization of political life. However, he said, it must be recognized that one year after the beginning of the transition, the Government had been confronted by great difficulties. Mr. Fambare Natchaba informed the Assembly that the draft constitution of the Fourth Republic had been approved in a referendum last Sunday. Because of the consensus that had been reached, he said, the violence that had affected Togo until recently was calming and all political parties had now access without restrictions, and in a full security, to all areas of the country.

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Turning to the problem of the chronic recession in the developing countries which, particularly in Africa, affected all aspects of life, the Foreign Minister of Togo called on the Assembly for a "new world economic order based on fairness and a more generous vision of international cooperation". The international community should garantee prices for commodities, dismantle tarrifs and other barriers to trade and mobilize the resources to relaunch investment and find a durable solution to the external debt crisis

Gonzalo Menendez Park, Guatemala's Minister of Foreign Affairs, spoke last night of the "lost decades" in his country - a 30-year period of confrontation which had led to neglect of Guatemala's primary problems - including hunger, undereducation, health problems, poverty and social concerns. However, Central America had taken its destiny in hand, he said, and had ended the spiral of violence. The process of change was now ready to bear fruit.

Unfortunately, the insurgents had failed to take advantage of the good will of the Government and had not accepted the proposal of the National Council for Conciliation. He urged the international community to appeal to the insurgents to adopt a realistic attitude and he expressed hope that, with United Nations assistance, the talks would continue.

In the promotion of human rights, he said, his country was receiving expert assistance from the Organization. At the same time, he expressed concern at the application of "selective criteria" in the work of the Human Rights Commission, saying some forms of racism and discrimination against minorities had been disregarded by the Commission in some nations.

In spite of efforts at economic recovery, Gambia shared with the rest of Africa a heavy financial burden, Omar B.Sey, Minister for External Affairs for Gambia, told the General Assembly last night.

Even if Gambia had successfully undertaken an economic recovery programme and, in 1991, started another programme aimed at achieving economic development, the attainment of economic growth, he said, required above all a favourable external environment. A conducive international economic and financial environment, he added, would help resolve the international debt crisis, restore adequate capital flows, create a more open world trading system which would result in sustained economic expansion and enhance private and public spending on human development. Also, he said, there was a need for continued external assistance in support of development efforts in the region.

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The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) operating in Croatia had not so far been able to achieve the goals of the plan for the three United Nations protected areas or to restore a degree of normality and inter-ethnic tolerance there before the winter sets in, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has said.

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In a further report to the Security Council, the Secretary-General stated that the "sad fact" was that the parties, and especially the "Knin authorities" (the authorities of the so-called Republic of Serbia Krajina) had not given UNPROFOR the full and sustained cooperation necessary for it to carry out its various mandates. The Knin forces totaled as many as 16,000 armed men, designated variously as "special police" or "border police". UNPROFOR Force Commander Satish Nambiar considered that their almost total ignorance of police work shows that, in reality, they were Serbian paramilitary forces.

In spite of the many problems faced by UNPROFOR, the Secretary-General wrote, the Force had achieved an agreement on the withdrawal of the remaining elements of the Yugoslav Army from Croatia and the demilitarization of the Prevlaka peninsula. With that agreement currently being finalized, the Secretary-General urged the Yugoslav Army to complete its long-delayed withdrawal from Croatia. Meanwhile, he wrote, he would recommend to the Security Council that it authorize UNPROFOR to assume responsibility for monitoring the agreed arrangements.

According to the report, the voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons -- for which the UNPROFOR is also responsible under its mandate -- had not been possible at this time because of inadequate security conditions. The Secretary-General warned that "ill-timed and uncoordinated returns" could lead to a further disaster. However, the Croatian Government had, despite warnings, told UNPROFOR that several thousand displaced persons would seek to force their way back into sector East today, 30 October. UNPROFOR had stated that it would accept no responsibility for what may follow, the report said. Document S/24600

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According to a joint declaration issued in Geneva today, President Dobrica Cosic of the Republic of Yugoslavia and President Franjo Tudjman of the Republic of Croatia have agreed to intensify work towards a normalization of relations between their two countries.

During the meeting, which took place under the auspices of the Co-Chairmen of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, Lord Owen and Cyrus Vance, the two Presidents agreed that authorities of their two nations, in close collaboration with the UNPROFOR, would undertake urgent, joint measures to ensure the peaceful return of all displaced persons to their homes, if they so desire. It was also agreed that the Yugoslav Army would leave Prevlaka by 20 October 1992, in accordance with the plan put forward by Mr. Vance. They also agreed to establish a Joint Interstate Committee for the consideration of all open issues and for the normalization of relations between their two States.

According to the joint declaration, both leaders reaffirmed their conviction that all problems between their two States must be settled peacefully and pledged their best efforts to that end. They also declared their total condemnation of all practices related to ethnic cleansing and

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committed themselves to helping reverse what had already happened. They welcomed the early stationing of international observers on airfields in their respective countries as a confidence-building measure and decided to meet again with the Co-Chairmen on 20 October.

In related news from Geneva today, the Co-Chairmen have continued discussions with the delegations participating in the talks on Bosnia and Herzegovina, in an effort to bring about the demilitarization of Sarajevo and the cessation of hostiilites. The delegations have agreed that discussions would commence immediately involving their military commanders and local authorities, under the good offices of UNPROFOR and the Geneva Conference.

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A staff member of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has been killed in southern Sudan and another is missing, UNICEF announced today.

Mr. Myint-Maung, a 58-year-old Myanmar national, was working on a relief project in southern Sudan when he and three other foreign nationals were taken prisoners by a faction of the Sudan People's Liberation Army on Monday, 28 September. Mr. Maung's body and that of a Norwegian freelance journalist, Helge Hummelvoll, were located several hours later.

Still missing are Francis Ngure, a 38-year-old Kenyan driver employed by UNICEF, and a Filipino national, Vilma Gomez, who worked with Interaid, an international non-governmental organization.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Foreign Minister Tofik Gassymov of Azerbaijan will sign an agreement at Headquarters on Thursday, 1 October, for the establishment of a new United Nations Interim Office in Azerbaijan.

The Secretary-General decided earlier this year to establish United Nations Interim Offices, with information and development components, in six countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States -- Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. These unified offices represent a new initiative for closer collaboration between the Secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in information and development activities in the field.

The first of the Interim Offices was opened in Minsk, Belarus, on 8 September, and an agreement to establish a similar office in Yerevan, Armenia, was signed on 17 September.

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Latvia has asked that United Nations observers participate in future negotiations between Latvia and the Russian Federation on the withdrawal of military forces from that territory.

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In a letter to the Secretary-General, dated 26 September, the Chairman of the Supreme Council of Latvia, Anatolijs Gorbunovs, said that he, in his address to the General Assembly, had expressed Latvia's willingness to adhere to the final document of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). In that document participating States committed themselves to end the "stationing of armed forces on the territories of the Baltic States without the required consent of those countries".
Document: S/24596

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali announced today that he had appointed Cedric Thornberry as the Deputy Chief of UNPROFOR. Mr. Thornberry, who will continue to serve as the Director of Civil Affairs of UNPROFOR, will in his new capacity be deputy to the Force Commander, Satish Nambiar (India).

The Secretary-General also announced that Major-General Philippe Morillon (France), who has been Deputy Force Commander of UNPROFOR since its inception, will take command of the expanded UNPROFOR operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Replacing General Morillon as Deputy Force Commander, based in Zagreb, is Major-General Robert Gaudreau (Canada).

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Oceanographer Jacques-Yves Cousteau today said mankind had been naive about overpopulation and had allowed a "formidable mistake which compromises our own future" to develop. "We are in a situation where we can't come back", he said. He was speaking at a press conference before delivering the Rafael Salas Population lecture, sponsored by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) at Headquarters today.

Mr. Cousteau said the development of medicine and health care, and the generous sharing of these new developments worldwide, had helped to increase life-span and successfully reduce ilnesses. As a result, population had grown. However, he said, everyone had benefitted from health care, but nobody had benefitted from family planning.

The world was now trying to catch up, he said, and work was being conducted to help bring family planning notions to people who are lacking in education. However, he pointed out that there were formidable obstacles impeding progress. There was a great deal of resentment between the countries of the North and South, he said. "When we want to talk to a woman in Bangladesh about birth control, her reaction is ... deal with your own business, we'll deal with ours". That attitude had made this mission extremely difficult, Captain Cousteau said. "It's going to require a lot of money and goodwill, he said. "We must not give up".

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